

transferring, via the Internet to a collection center, the obtained program ID and the viewed time information along with ID data of the viewer.

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12. (Amended) A method for obtaining audience data on TV programs according to claim 2, wherein said step of obtaining TV program table data includes automatically obtaining said TV program table data, and said step of transferring includes automatically performing the transmission to the collection center, both by making use of opportunities of the viewer's accessing the Internet.

REMARKS

Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-13 are pending in this application of which claims 1-6, 11 and 12 have been amended herein.

In the Office Action dated December 5, 2001, the Examiner objects to the specification. Applicants' attorney has carefully reviewed the specification and makes the above noted amendments to the specification. The amendment at page 18 is to correct a typographical error ("pats" should have been --parts--). The amendment at page 26 is to correct the line break which occurred between the left parenthesis and the letter "W". The amendment moves the parenthesis mark so it is on the same line as the word following it. If the Examiner has other changes that he would like, please let us know the specific areas of concern and we will gladly make corrections. However, we are unable to locate

Internet allows the viewer to access the center via a nearby access point of the provider, which reduces the telephone charges and the congestion of line accesses, facilitating the collection of audience data in a wide area over the country (page 5, lines 17-26).

(iii) Further, the viewed channel and time information are detected and compared with those in TV program table data to identify a viewed TV program, on the viewer's side, thereby reducing the processing load at the collection center (page 5, line 27 to page 6, line 2).

Welsh (US 5374951) discloses a device for obtaining audience data on TV programs as pointed out in the Office Action. However, not only does the reference fail to explicitly show the "step of transferring, via the Internet to a collection center, the obtained program ID and the viewed time information along with ID data of the viewer" as pointed out by the Examiner, but it also fails to teach Applicants' features (a) and (b) as listed below.

(a) It seems that the Examiner takes Welsh's "character string table" (column 3, lines 29-24; column 4, line 61 to column 5, line 6) as being equivalent to Applicants' "TV program table". However, this is not correct. Welsh's table is such a table that when the program monitoring unit is first installed in a household, the table is initialized with the character strings and program identification codes for the commercials that it will search for, and whenever the program monitoring unit communicates

Therefore, Welsh, even in combination with Gerace (US 5848396), fails to teach or suggest Applicants' inventions recited in Applicants' claims 1, 6 and 11.

The claims other than claims 1, 6 and 11 depend from either of the independent claims, and, hence, it is respectfully submitted that they are also patentable even when considering the other references relied upon, Gerace (US 5848396) and Rothmuller (US 5635989).

No amendment made was related to the statutory requirements of patentability unless expressly stated herein. No amendment made was for the purpose of narrowing the scope of any claim, unless applicants have argued herein that such amendment was made to distinguish over a particular reference or combination of references.

In light of the above noted amendments and remarks, this application is believed in condition for allowance and notice thereof is respectfully solicited. The Examiner is urged to contact applicants' attorney at 503-224-0115 if there are any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

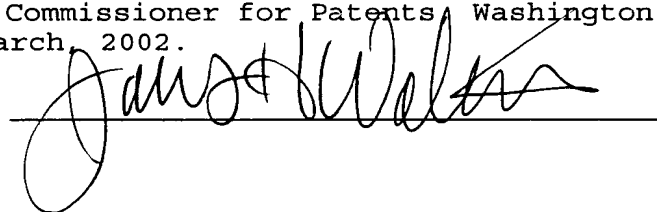


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transferring includes automatically and regularly performing the transmission to the collection center.

3. (Amended) A method for obtaining audience data on TV programs according to claim 1, wherein said [first] step of obtaining TV program table data includes automatically obtaining said TV program table data, and said [forth] step of transferring includes automatically performing the transmission to the collection center, both by making use of opportunities of the viewer's accessing the Internet.

4. (Amended) A method for obtaining audience data on TV programs according to claim 1, wherein said [second] step of obtaining audience data includes ignoring a continuously viewed time of a program when the viewed time is shorter than a predetermined time.

5. (Amended) A method for obtaining audience data on TV programs according to claim 1, wherein said [fourth] step of transferring includes transmitting said data to be transferred as an HTML text document or an electronic mail.

6. (Amended) A device for obtaining audience data on TV programs, comprising:

a program table data obtaining means for obtaining, from outside, TV program table data for an area where a viewer resides, said TV program table data including channel information

and time information for each of TV programs planned to be broadcast in that area;

a detector for detecting a channel that is being viewed by the viewer;

an audience data obtaining means for obtaining audience data which include viewed channel information and viewed time information of TV based on a result of the detecting of the viewed channel;

a program identification means for obtaining at least a program ID of a viewed program from said TV program table data by comparing said audience data with said TV program table data; and

a transfer means for transferring, via the Internet to a collection center, the obtained program ID and the viewed time information along with ID data of the viewer.

11. (Amended) A recording medium storing a computer readable program for carrying out the steps of:

[a first step of] obtaining, from outside, TV program table data for an area where a viewer resides, said TV program table data including channel information and time information for each of TV programs planned to be broadcast in that area;

detecting a channel that is being viewed by the viewer;

[a second step of] obtaining audience data which include viewed channel information and viewed time information of TV based on a result of the detecting of the viewed channel;

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the view end time of the program. Then, the difference time ΔT is calculated by subtracting ST from ET (S611).

Subsequently, it is checked whether or not an audience data record of the same program and the same date is already present
5 in the audience data table 800 (S612). When separate ^{PARTS} parts of the same program are viewed, two records would be created. In the present embodiment, however, such records are coupled into one record so that only one record is present for one program.

If no audience data record of the same program and the same
10 date is present, then the view percentage Q(P) is calculated, which, together with its channel ID, program ID, T1, T2, ST and ET, is added as one record into the audience data record table 800 (S613). If an audience data record of the same program and the same date is present, then the previous record is updated by
15 adding a new set of ST and ET to the previous record, summing the current ΔT with the previous ΔT to create a new ΔT , and calculating a new Q(P) (S614).

Subsequently, as in step S603, a new program of the current channel CCH is identified (S615). Then, the current time is set
20 as the view start time ST of the program (S617). After this, the CCH is set to the PCH and the process of this time is terminated (S617).

In previous step S606, if the current channel CCH is not the same as the previous channel PCH, that is, a channel change
25 has occurred, then it is checked whether or not the program of the previous channel has been viewed continuously for x seconds or more (S609). This is, when a channel change has occurred, to

data to the collection center. This process has the following meanings: Since this process depends upon a viewer's voluntary action, such accessing is not his or her obligation and not to be expected. However, it is expected that some accesses to the Internet are made in a significant number of households. Therefore, such opportunities can be used to automatically acquire the program table data or to transmit the audience data, thereby relieving the congestion of accessing to the collection center in the case of regular accessing, and the concentration of the processing load on the collection center.

The process of FIG. 12 may be incorporated in a WWW browsing software, for example, a software called "browser". When this process is activated by a viewer, firstly it is checked whether or not the connection to the line has already been established (S1201). If not, the connection is made (S1202). Subsequently, a viewer's operation for normal browser operation is accepted to perform a predetermined operation (S1203).

Upon request for terminating the browser from the viewer (Yes in S1204), then a unique operation in the present embodiment will be performed. First, it is checked whether or not program table data is to be acquired (S1205). It is decided that no such acquisition is needed, for example, just after acquiring the program table data regularly as described with reference to FIG. 2, or when this process is activated twice or more in the same day. In the regularly activated process as in FIG. 2, the acquisition is made every week or every other week,

and hence, in this process it is preferable to judge that no program table data acquisition is needed in step S1205 if new program data is obtained within one week from that day.

(Whether such new data is obtained or not may depend upon whether
5 the updating of the program table offered is made every day, every few days or every week.)

When no program table data acquisition is to be made, control proceeds to step S1208.

When program table data is to be acquired, the URL offering
10 the program data table is accessed (S1206), and necessary program table data is acquired to be stored in a predetermined storage means (S1207).

Subsequently, if unsent audience data remains stored, then the data is transmitted to the collection center (S1208). The
15 method of transmission is as stated above.

Finally, the line is disconnected (S1209) and this process is terminated.

Although a preferred embodiment of the present invention has been described hereinbefore, a lot of variations and
20 modifications can be made without departing from the scope of the present invention.

For example, conventionally another audience rating research is performed which is made as to not only households, but individuals who are members of the household. For this
25 purpose, an approach has been proposed that identifies the members by having them push their own selection buttons when selecting a channel with a remote controller, or by use of a